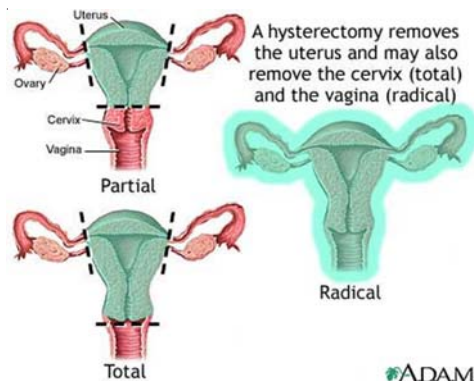


Utah Cancer Control Program

Hysterectomy Fact Sheet



A hysterectomy may be done through an abdominal or a vaginal incision.

WHAT IS A HYSTERECTOMY?

A Hysterectomy is an operation in which the uterus and cervix are taken out along with the cancer. Having a hysterectomy is a very common operation. There are several different variations of this operation.

- A partial Hysterectomy is the removal of just the upper portion of the uterus, leaving the cervix and the base of the uterus intact.
- A total hysterectomy is removal of the entire uterus and cervix.
- A radical hysterectomy is the removal of the uterus, both Fallopian tubes, both ovaries, and the upper part of the vagina.

A Hysterectomy may be done through an abdominal incision or through a vaginal incision.

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER A HYSTERECTOMY

You should expect to stay in the hospital from five to seven days for recovery. Complete recovery from a hysterectomy may require two weeks to two months depending on severity of surgery. However, recovery from a vaginal hysterectomy is faster than from an abdominal hysterectomy. Moving about as soon as possible helps to avoid blood clots in the legs and other problems. Avoid lifting heavy objects for a few weeks following surgery. Sexual activities should be avoided after surgery for six up to eight weeks.

THE ADVANTAGES

A hysterectomy may be a life-saving procedure in the case of cancer. Some women have expressed that the surgery was a welcome relief from pain, discomfort and bleeding.

THE DISADVANTAGES

In addition to surgical risks, there may be longer-term physical and psychological effects, potentially including depression and loss of sexual pleasure. If the ovaries are

removed along with the uterus prior to menopause (change of life), there is an increased risk of osteoporosis and heart disease as well. Finally, once you have a hysterectomy it is not reversible.

COMPLICATIONS AND SIDE EFFECTS

Twenty-five to fifty percent of hysterectomy patients will have one or more complications, however most are minor or reversible. A major result of having hysterectomy is the ending of a woman's ability to become pregnant.

Complications may include:

- Severe vaginal bleeding
- Injury to the bowel or bladder
- Infection
- Blood clots
- Increased risk of heart attack
- Persistent pain
- Diminished sexual response or
- Death